



Agriculture still at the heart of the Kansas economy

I recently spent a day in southwest Kansas participating in the Kansas Farm Bureau's annual Governor's Farm & Ranch Tour.

Once again, it was a great experience. The places we visited and people we talked to reminded me once again how important agriculture is to the Kansas economy and our quality of life.

Whenever I visit a farm, ranch or agribusiness I'm struck by the role that technology is playing in helping farmers, ranchers, and small business owners maximize the efficiency of their operations. This year's tour was no exception.

Each of the 8,000 cows we saw at a Gray County dairy operation had bands affixed to their legs that provided incredibly detailed information, down to how many steps each had taken since its last milking.

Seeing that technology reminded me of riding in a combine during last year's wheat harvest and learning about how farmers use Global Positioning Systems to map their fields and maximize their harvests.

When I see farmers and ranchers working so hard to innovate and keep their operations competitive, it inspires me to redouble my efforts as the state's primary trade ambassador. During an upcoming trip to Japan, I will do all I can to convince officials that they should have absolutely no concerns about Mad Cow Disease and should reopen their markets to Kansas beef.

Beyond working to promote Kansas agricultural products, I'm also determined to do something about soaring health care costs, which are making coverage too expensive for many farmers and ranchers, as well as thousands of other hardworking Kansans.

I will ask the Legislature to endorse a plan during its upcoming session to make health insurance more affordable for Kansas businesses as well as farmers and ranchers.

My plan will also use the state's purchasing power to force reforms in the health care system. It's estimated that about \$4 billion of the \$12.5 billion that Kansans spend every year on health care is consumed by administrative costs. If we can simplify the system by relieving doctors and nurses of burdensome paperwork we can control costs.

I'd like to hear from you about this and other issues. Please visit my Web site at <http://www.ksgovernor.org/> and use the "contact the governor" button to send me an e-mail. Or, you can call my constituent services office toll-free at 1-877-579-6757.